

Cultural Aspects of India-Korea Relations

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Outline of Presentation

- **Introduction:** Why this study?
- **Cultural Differences Encountered by Koreans in India:** Why is India like this?
- **Some Important Non-verbal Korean Cultural Concepts for Indians:** How can I function better in Korea/with Koreans
- **Cultural Differences Encountered by Indians at Work-places in Korea:** How are Koreans and why are they like this?
- **Analysis:** Let's bridge the gap

Introduction

Why this study?

India-Korea Contemporary Bilateral Relations

- India's New Economic Policy & Look East Policy
- Korea's search for Economic Partners
- Signing of CEPA
- Booming Trade Relations
- Complementary Economies & Promising Investment Relations
- Hurdles, Disappointments & Frustrations
- Need to understand each other

Why Is India like this?

Cultural differences perceived by Koreans in India

- Culture and Politics:
 - India divided by minority groups
 - Social cleavages – caste, community
 - Land acquisition – hurdles like property rights, multi-party, federal democracy, vote capturing
 - Foreign firms face opposition by incumbent firms + covert protectionism by government
 - Confucian hierarchical ethic Vs Indian philosophical value system

Cultural differences.....

contd.

- Culture and Society:
 - Communication gap + Misunderstandings due to differences in nuances of words and conditioning of mind
 - Lack of accountability of total work – work divided into segments, shifting responsibility
 - Hate being admonished or blamed, appear argumentative
 - Indifferent to foreign opinions – lack of professionalism

**How can I function better in
Korea/with Koreans?**

Some Important Non-verbal Korean Cultural Concepts for Indians

- *Punigi*

- A created environment rather than an external one.
- Very important to elicit right result
- Anticipating, and preparing both tangible and intangible components

- *Kibun*

- A frame of mind
- Positive aspect: 'good feeling'. Negative aspect: 'bad feeling.'
- *Punigi* and *Kibun* both important for the success of an event
- Adversarial damage to *Kibun* affects physical and mental well-being
- Damage caused by unfavourable situation – failure, loss of face, humiliation, rudeness, disrespect, betrayal etc

Some Non-verbal Cultural Concepts...

contd.

- *Nunch'i*
- Shrewdness to sense or assess a situation
- Necessary to be sensitive to non-verbal cues and subtleties
- Body language, expression of face, intonation of voice – all very important cues.
- *Nunch'i* very important for positive result
- *Ch'emyeon*
- Safeguarding one's self-esteem. Very important for successful result.
- Aggrieved party needs to be given space to manoeuvre
- Any compromise may be seen as loss of face if not handled properly

How are the Koreans?

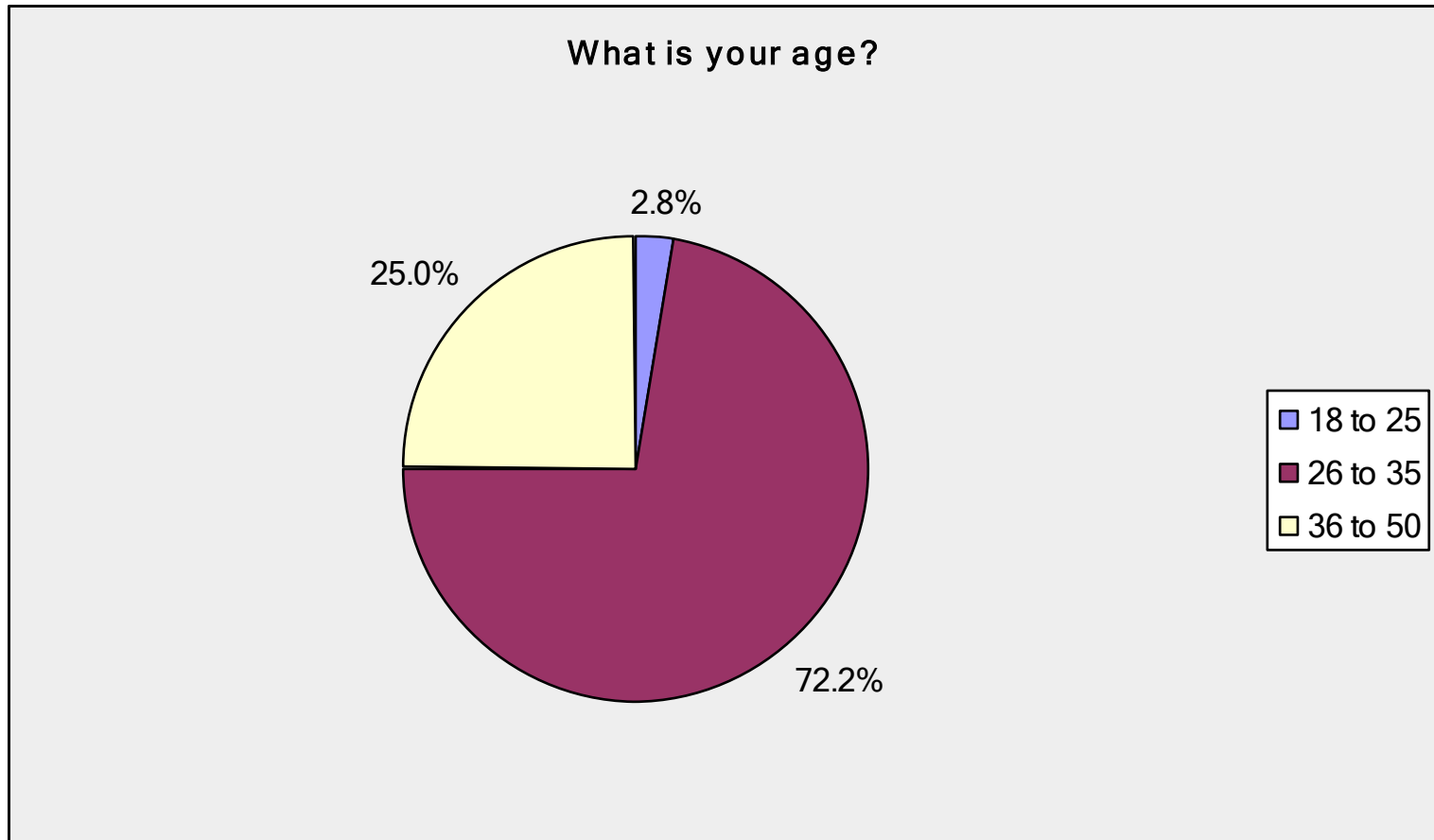
Why are they like this?

Koreans: As seen by Indians

- Through Survey. **Survey Method:**
- **Survey questions** : multiple choice , rating scale questions and open- ended questions.
- **Participants:** Indians working in Korean firms in Korea.
- **Time:** Three weeks to send response. Follow-up reminders also sent.
- **No. of Respondents:** 36. Analysis based on their response.
- **Sample pool: Gender:** Men and women.
Level: Senior management, middle management, supervisors and employees.
Terms of appointment: Permanent, temporary and contractual.

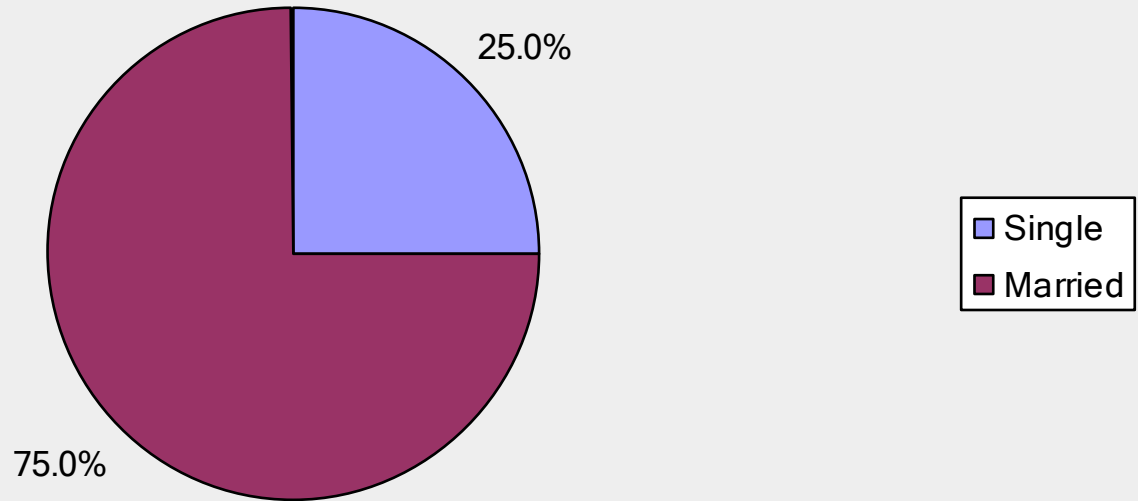
Survey

The graphic representation of the pool:



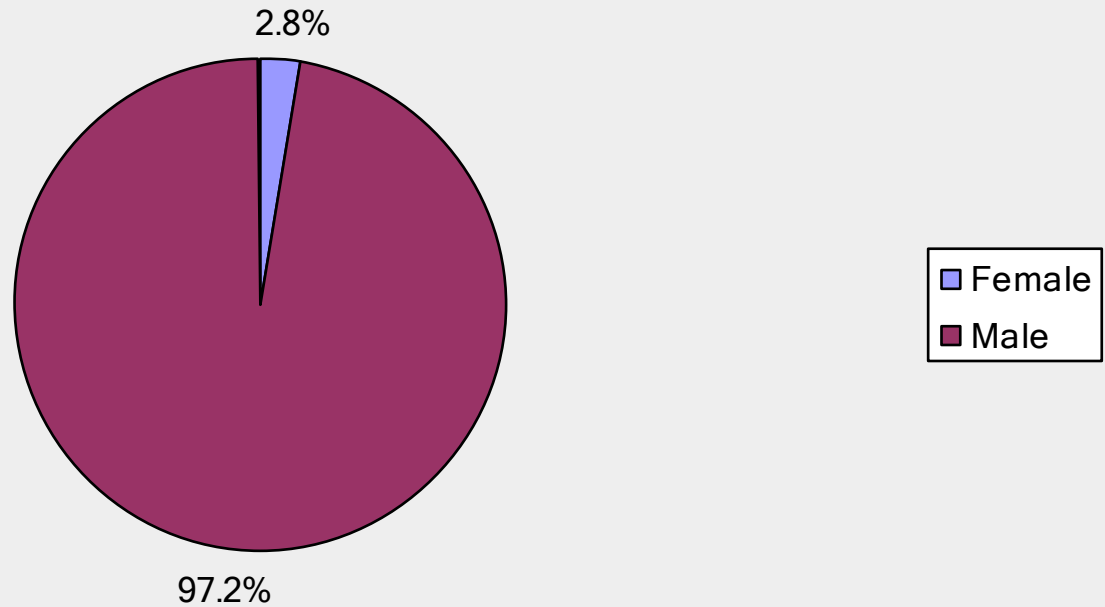
Survey Pool

What is your marital status?



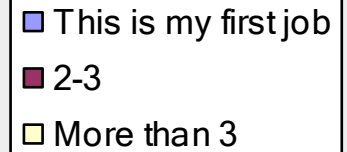
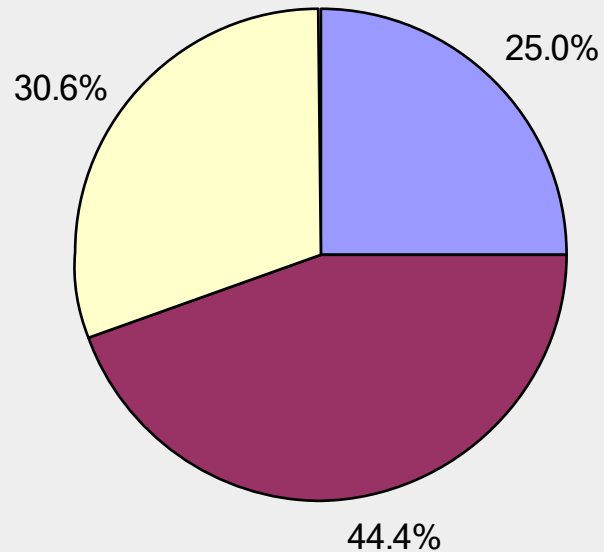
Survey Pool

What is your gender?



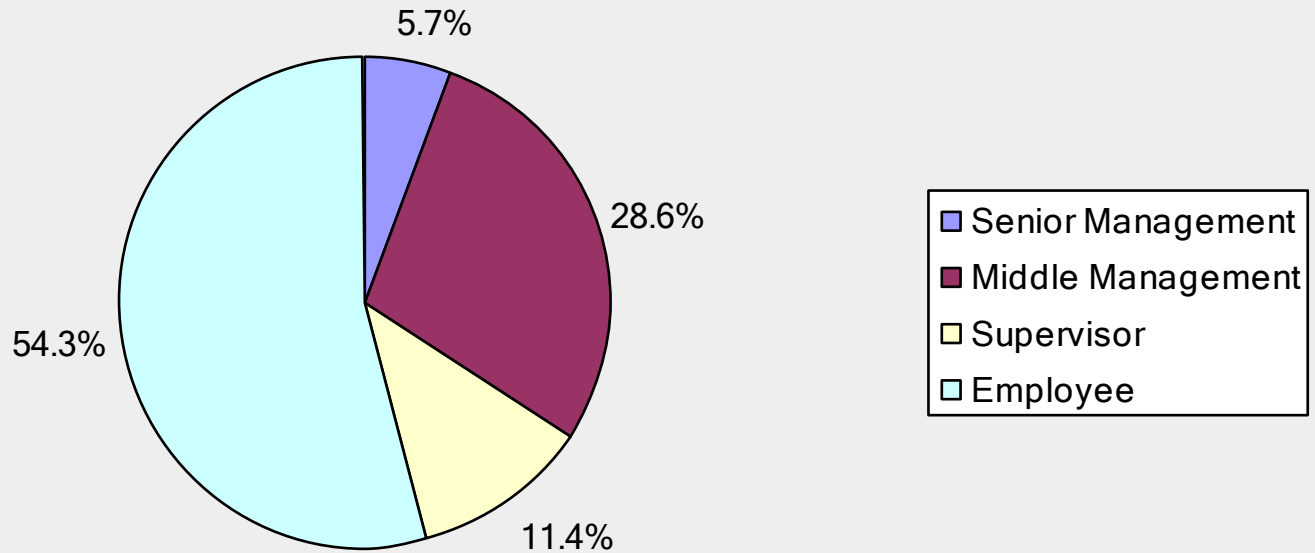
Survey Pool

How many jobs have you held before this one?



Survey Pool

Which of the following best describes your job?



Survey: A graded ques.

Attitudes to Work

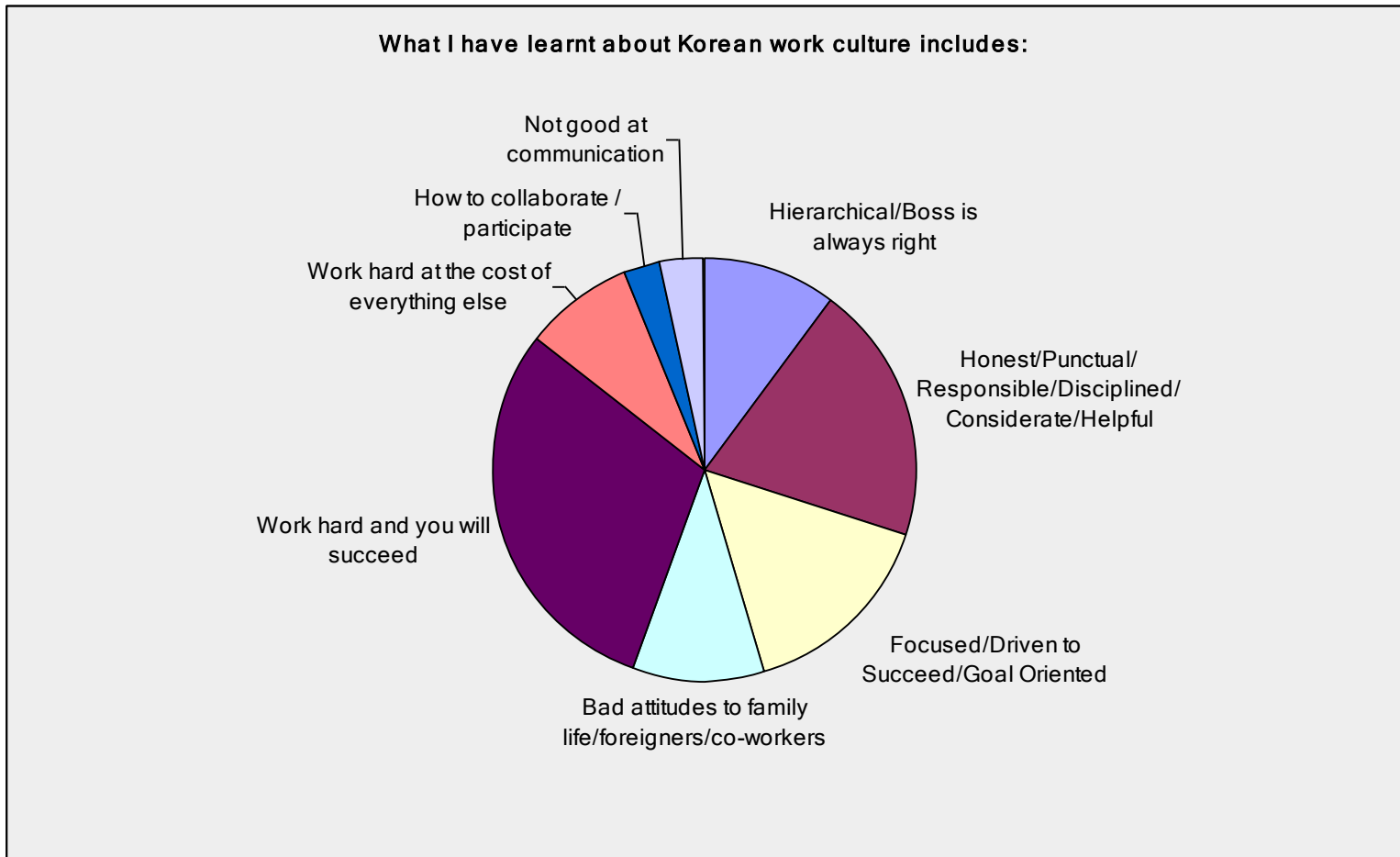
<- Agree to Disagree ->



Survey: A multiple choice ques.



Survey: an open-ended ques.



A few things Indians have observed

- Work precedes everything else or in other words work is supreme.
- They are driven to succeed and therefore focused and goal oriented, and working hard is very important to succeed.
- Koreans are honest workers, punctual, responsible, disciplined, considerate and helpful. They collaborate and work well as a group. However, there seems some reservation about consideration shown to family life, their attitude towards foreigners and co-workers.
- They are hierarchical and the boss has to be followed and can rarely be questioned.

Work Culture

In Korea

- Formal and hierarchical. Hierarchy is sacrosanct.
- Result and target oriented and therefore:
 - (a) working hours could extend beyond the normal hours fixed at the time of appointment;
 - (b) there is no place for non-performance or non-delivery;
 - (c) they appear inconsiderate and lacking in softness as there is no place for any other consideration; only head rules;
 - (d) they are punctual and time conscious and meetings are held on time;
 - (e) hold regular meetings and rely on regular feed-backs; reviewing, reflecting and revising are normal ways of functioning;
 - (f) critical assessment has now found a place at work places in Korea

In India

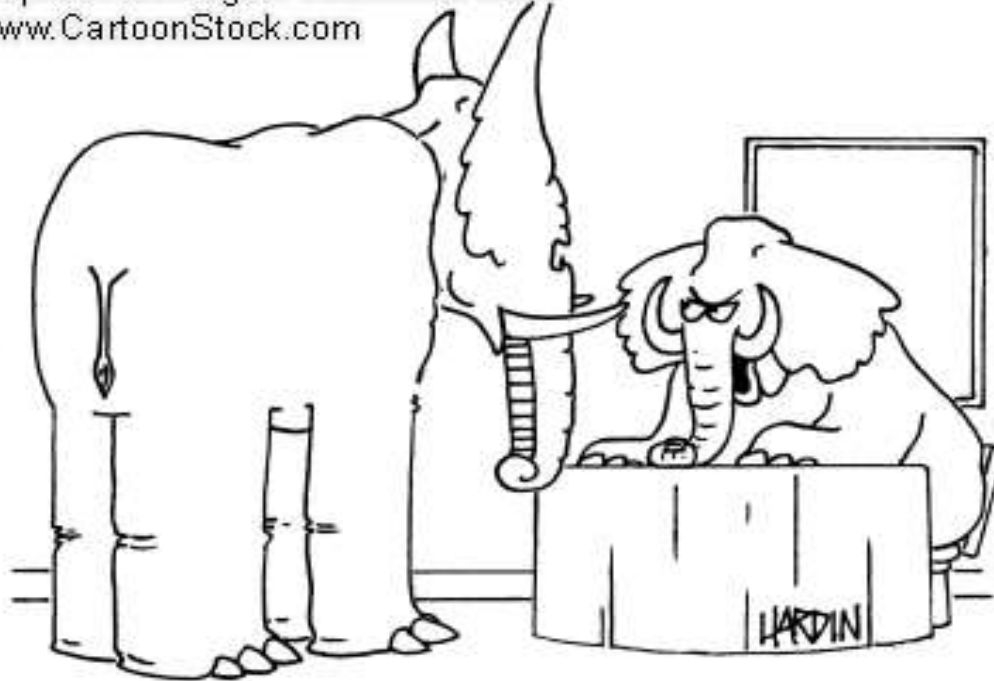
- Comparatively less formal and less hierarchical. Or, hierarchy can at times be challenged. Not essential for juniors to stay at work until the boss leaves.
- More process oriented than target oriented and therefore less professional. Therefore:
 - (a) normally stick to working hours specified at the time of appointment; no time constrictions;
 - (b) a lot of adjustments are made for non-performance and non-delivery; intention plays a major role;
 - (c) all other considerations too find space at the work place; both head and heart rule;
 - (d) a very flexible concept of time therefore no major tensions;
 - (e) meetings are usually treated as get-togethers for a cup of tea; feedback meetings are rarely held;
 - (f) criticism is often avoided or either left unsaid or is garbed to lessen the impact.

Office environment



Time

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"You were supposed to be here hours ago —
and don't try to tell me you forgot!"



Stress



Work Culture

....Contd.

In Korea

- Koreans prefer working in groups. Therefore, collective responsibility taken.
- They prefer sticking to rules, format and norms. Therefore there is standardisation and very little scope for deviation and at the same time very little space for originality.
- They are quick at adapting to changing situations and making necessary changes. This often bemuses foreigners and gives a feeling of a constant state of flux.

In India

- Quite individualistic but hate taking blame, and hate taking responsibility. Find extraneous reasons as excuses.
- Very contextual rules that can be bent to make adjustments; a lot of scope for intuitive working.
- By and large like to stick to the well trodden ways of doing things, maybe with minor modifications at times.

Why the difference?

Korea

- Largely export-oriented. So:
 1. Deadlines + global stds. to be met
 2. Therefore, professional, time and rule-based
- But, Confucianism still deeply ingrained. So:
 1. Presentation important. Long-term thinking
 2. Hierarchical, high sense of loyalty
 3. Work collectively

India

- Exports a small % of market. So:
 1. Laid back about deadlines/targets
 2. No standardization of product
 3. Less professional. More concerned with 'intentions'+ immediate gains
 4. Individualistic. Questioning - a natural demeanour

Why the difference?

Indians in Korean firms in India

- Feel tremendous pressure of work
- Find hours of work very long
- Find Koreans lacking compassion

- **Reasons:**

Pressures of local societal environment

Family pressures + private lives intruding

Indians in Koreans firms in Korea

- Do not feel much pressure of work
- Find long hours of work normal
- Find Koreans quite considerate

- **Reasons:**

Absence of Indian societal pressures

Based in Korean society

An understanding family

Let's understand each other

“Koreans are very good at pursuing and accomplishing conspicuous and tangible projects, rather than setting up long-term goals that are uncertain and nebulous.”*

* A quote by a Korean scholar

THANK YOU